

Meeting of the **COUNCIL**

Wednesday, 18 January 2017 at 7.00 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

PAGE NUMBER

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Council's Constitution provides for the Elected Mayor to give a report at each Ordinary Council Meeting. **1 - 10**

A maximum of five minutes is allowed for the Elected Mayor's report, following which the Speaker of the Council will invite the respective political group leaders to respond for up to one minute each if they wish.

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Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services
Tel: 020 7364 4651, E-mail: matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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Mayor's Report to Council 18th January 2017

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Happy New Year, and I hope you all had a restful break. For some a little less restful - another of our Councillors, Amy Whitelock Gibbs, has become a parent for the first time, for which congratulations to her and Carlo, and to young Felix too.

This meeting comes quite soon after the last one, and following the break, so this report is shorter than usual. The next few weeks will be taken up with the budget though, so it's an opportunity to catch up on other issues.

Key Events/Announcements

Priorities for 2017: The Strategic Plan is being refreshed for 17/18.

Alongside this I have written to our Chief Executive, outlining particular priorities for the coming year. A copy of this letter is attached to this report. The key theme is that although we are continuing with rebuilding the Council's organisation and performance, we need to accelerate our change with a number of priorities that will focus on the future.

Organisation structure: Our organisation review has now been concluded and confirmed and the new structures established. In the next few months we will be recruiting to fill vacancies. I am pleased that Graham White has, as an interim, been appointed as Monitoring Officer and Director of Governance.

Budget : As stated the next Council meeting will be dominated by our annual budget deliberations. The draft budget is published and I think it achieves painful budget savings while protecting services. There are however some tough choices – you cannot save £1 in every £6 you currently spend without this. I remain open to discussion in the coming few weeks.

CTRS: A key purpose of tonight's meeting is the agreement of next year's position on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. This has been considered at Cabinet and I am proposing a scheme in which those on very low household incomes will continue to receive 100% exemption, with no 'minimum payments'. With the intensity of poverty in our borough I and my colleagues on the Labour side believe it is the right policy.

Commissioners: This week I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirming progress with removing our directions. The direction on procurement has been lifted, and, with continuing oversight, we have regained our power to make Grant payments, which for almost two years were being made by Commissioners themselves. The making of Grants was one of the most controversial matters under my predecessor and the process of regaining the powers has been slow and frustrating but I think we can proceed with confidence now.

It is still to be hoped that the Commissioners will go at the end of March but we anticipate that there will be some continuing relationship between ourselves and the Government after this. I still need to meet the Secretary of State to discuss this further. The conduct of members, including failure of recognition by some members that it has been a problem, remains, in my view, a residual concern. As regards historic complaints, the 'Clear Up Team' deadline passed and just under 70 complaints were received. These are now

being processed, at arm's length from the Council, by an independently led team.

Youth Services: The reorganisation of youth services was agreed in principle at the January Cabinet. There will now be further consultation during the early part of this year. I anticipate that youth services will be provided from about 25 venues across the borough, but that these will be targeted to achieve better 'outputs' and, crucially for young people, outcomes than in the recent past. I want, however, to emphasise that I have great respect for our committed band of serving youth workers.

Osmani School/School places: I made a clear statement opposing the announcement, without consultation, that Osmani Primary School would change its name to Vallance. I think this is an unwise decision, and will be viewed by many as disrespectful to the experiences and history of the Bangladeshi community. And of course General Osmani was a distinguished British soldier, prior to independence. I think the name of the school is not the determining factor of its character, but it is a significant symbol of our diverse and rich history.

The change is at least partly motivated by concerns about falling school rolls in the West of our Borough. This is a quite significant problem. School demand is quite unpredictable at the present, and is further affected by the arrival, unplanned, of Free Schools in the borough. As an example, a new primary school is arriving soon in Whitechapel (and a secondary too) for which there is no real local need.

I have been holding discussions, as have our officers and my cabinet member, about how we can better manage this process, which includes the planned further arrival of two new secondary schools, one on the Island, the other in Wapping. Do we need them? When do we need them? And what form should they take?

Waste, featuring Pink Sacks: I regret the mess we have got into with the distribution and availability of pink sacks for recyclable waste. I have instructed that their distribution from Libraries and Idea Stores resume on Wednesdays and Saturdays, with effect from next week. In addition, street properties should receive direct delivery.

The recycling service needs to improve, with higher percentages achieved, and less contaminated waste, for which we are penalised, collected. I am clear that pink sacks are a bit of a red herring in this, as we need to redesign the service. I have instructed that early and more thorough progress is made with this and will announce some further changes soon.

Government proposals to require ID at elections: Following the Pickles Review, Government has made it clear that Tower Hamlets voters will be expected to produce identification documents at future elections. I remain sceptical about this proposal but it looks as if it will happen. We are both awaiting guidance but also thinking about how this might be done. At its root, this is a matter for our Returning Officer and not the Executive Mayor, but it may both have resource implications and also, perhaps, offer other opportunities if it is to happen.

ASB review progressing: A review of our anti-social behaviour policies is taking place, and I look forward to making a comprehensive announcement in the near future about how our range of initiatives, and partnership working, can be better coordinated and managed. This work is an important priority for the coming months and year.

Cabinet and Mayoral Decisions: Cabinet has met once since my last report and considered a number of matters, with decisions published on the Council's website. In addition, Mayoral Decisions have been signed on:

- New Grants Procedure
- Microsoft Enterprise License
- Shop Leases for Ben Johnson Road

Engagements and Meetings: 6 December 2016 – 18 January 2017

- 6 December 2016
 - Interview with Young Fabians Magazine
 - London Councils Leaders Committee
 - Introduction to new apprentices
 - Meeting with Cllr Shiria Khatun
 - Violence against Women and Girls pledge signing
 - Cabinet
- 7 December 2016
 - Housing Event
 - Meeting with Chief Executive
 - Best Value Board pre-meet
 - 150th Anniversary of Central Foundation Boys and Girls School
 - Speakers Charity Ball
- 8 December 2016
 - Meeting with THH Chief Executive
 - Meeting with Cllr Asma begum
 - Meeting with Director, Adult Services
 - Channel S Interview
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Services
 - Mayor's Surgery
 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 9 December 2016
 - Local Plan Workshops briefing meeting
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Resources
 - Meeting with Constituent
 - Meeting with Commissioners
 - Dashghar Union Progoti Trust UK Ceremony
 - Tower Hamlets Cricket Club and London Tigers Cricket Awards Evening
- 12 December 2016
 - Meeting with Cllr John Pierce
 - Meeting with Officers re. Victoria Park Lido
 - Meeting between LBTH and City of London
 - Meeting with Lord Nash
 - Meeting with Chief Executive

- Site Tour with Mount Anvil with Chief Executive
- 13 December 2016
 - Constituents meeting re Watts Street and Spirit Street
 - Meeting with Service Head, Corporate Strategy
 - Cabinet/CMT Budget session
 - Mayoral Assembly
- 14 December 2016
 - Meeting with Officers re. ASB
 - Planning Meeting
 - Meeting with Chisenhale Art Place
 - Meeting with officers re. Parking
 - OAPF Strategic Partnership Board Meeting
 - ICON College Best Achiever Awards Party
- 15 December 2016
 - Meeting with Cllr Oliur Rahman (did he come?)
 - Isle of Dogs Working Group
 - Meeting with Chief Executive
 - Meeting with International Forum for Secular Bangladesh
 - Site Visit to Harriot House
 - Visit to Whitechapel Gallery
 - Mayor's Surgery
- 19 December 2016
 - Youth Engagement Project meeting
 - Meeting with Centre for London
 - Visit to Foodbank
 - Briefing meeting with Canary Wharf
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Development and Renewal
 - Meeting with Cllr Ayas Miah
 - Meeting with Service Head, Public Realm
- 20 December 2016
 - Meeting with NAFAS
 - Meeting with Commissioners
 - Meeting with Sir Ken Knight
 - Meeting with Officers re. Early Years Children's Centres
 - Meeting with Cllr Shiria Khatun
 - Meeting with Swan Housing Association
 - Meeting with Old Ford Housing Association
 - Somali Task Force Update Meeting
 - Meeting with Somali Community representatives
- 21 December 2016
 - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
 - Meeting with residents re. Branch Road Proposals
 - Meeting with Director, Adult Services
 - Meeting between LBTH and Poplar Harca
 - Meeting with Chief Executive
 - Meeting with Citizens UK
 - Meeting with Somali Community representatives
- 22 December 2016
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Children's Services
 - Meeting with Genesis Housing Association

- Meeting with Police and LMC & others re. Safe and Secure
 - Home visit
 - Meeting with Cllr Oliur Rahman
 - Meeting with Cllr Ayas Miah
- 23 December 2016
 - Visit to Lansbury Mosque
- 4 January 2017
 - Meeting with constituent
 - Mansard Roof discussion
 - Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 5 January 2017
 - Meeting with Cllr Asma Begum
 - Meeting with Service Head, Corporate Strategy
 - Meeting with officers re. Roman Road Neighbourhood
 - Meeting with Service Head Education and Partnership
 - Mayor's Surgery
- 6 January 2017
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Resources
 - Interview with The Times
 - Meeting with Unmesh Desai AM
- 9 January 2017
 - Stepney Area highways Consultation briefing meeting
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Development and Renewal
 - Floorwalking with Chief Executive
 - Meeting with residents re. Killick Way
- 10 January 2017
 - Meeting with Sir Michael Bear
 - Meeting with Service Head, Communications
 - Meeting with officers re: recycling bags
 - Meeting with Cllr Sirajul Islam
 - Meeting with Cllr Rachael Saunders
 - Cabinet
- 11 January 2017
 - Meeting with Officers re. ASB
 - Interviews for Interim Monitoring Officer post
- 12 January 2017
 - Meeting with Chief Executive
 - Floor walk with Chief Executive
 - Meeting with Cllr Rachel Blake
 - Muslim Aid Soup Kitchen
 - Swanlea Schools Mental Health Awareness Launch
 - Mayor's Surgery
 - Public Meeting – London Chest Hospital Development Plans
- 16 January 2017
 - Meeting with Len Duvall
 - Meeting with Cllr Shiria Khatun
 - Meeting with the New Providence Wharf Hotel
 - Meeting with Corporate Director, Development and Renewal
 - Meeting with Chief Executive
 - Floorwalk with the Chief Executive

- Meeting with Cllr Ayas Miah
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 17 January 2017
 - Cabinet/CMT Budget session
 - Press Briefing
 - Meeting with Director, Adult Services
 - Best Value Board Pre-meet
 - Grants Determination (Cabinet) sub-committee
 - Constitutional Working Party
- 18 January 2017
 - Meeting with constituent
 - Meeting with Service Head, HR and WD
 - Council Meeting

Will Tuckley
Chief Executive
6th Floor, Mulberry Place

By email: will.tuckley@towerhamlets.gov.uk

18 January 2017

Executive Mayor's Office

Tower Hamlets Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG

Contact: Gulshan Begum
Tel: 020 7364 6971
Fax: 020 7364 4999

mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

Dear Will,

It is now over eighteen months since my election as Mayor of Tower Hamlets, and just over a year since you became our Chief Executive. As 2017 begins, and we set our Budget for the next three years, this is a good time to write to you restating my priorities for Tower Hamlets and how I believe the Council needs to continue to change so that it can serve residents better.

When I was elected we were in a crisis following the removal of my predecessor, and we have spent much of our time since then tackling and resolving those areas of weak management and compromised leadership. This has proved tougher than expected. Meeting this challenge was necessary, and we have made good progress together, but we must now transform the Council into a more outward looking, responsive, and delivery focused body.

It is worth restating my vision for Tower Hamlets, as expressed in our Strategic Plan. This has two key strands. First, a commitment to making every neighbourhood in the borough a great place to live, with excellent universal public services and a high quality environment for all communities to enjoy. And second, a determination to build a more socially just, compassionate, and enabling borough, in which vulnerable people are able to live with dignity and security, in which our diverse communities are treated with respect, and in which we both directly support those residents who need us and also better enable all residents to help themselves.

That is why, for example, we want to be a council that offers excellent social services that meet the needs of the vulnerable, but also one that plays a bigger role in maximising jobs and training for residents so that growth reduces inequality, rather than entrenching it. We shouldn't forget the enormous energy that most people bring with them to our borough and the massive benefit that can be achieved if we can help them to unlock it.

Key Priorities

People deserve, expect and pay for high quality services. Our overriding goal must be to turn Tower Hamlets into an excellent council, with the ambition to achieve the best for our citizens. There are four key priorities that I expect the Council to place a particular focus on in 2017, while we continue to improve our overall management of services and delivery of all Strategic Plan targets and carry out the necessary changes driven by our budget:

a) **Cleaner Streets.** Our residents want to live in places they are proud of, and we must support that with better waste and refuse arrangements and an improved public realm in priority neighbourhoods. This must include cleanliness, better lighting, attractive open spaces and a better enforcement regime where we are being let down. I would like to see a comprehensive approach to this agenda brought forward.

b) **Safer Communities.** Every citizen should feel safe and secure in their home, street or estate. The council must have a clear plan to tackle anti-social behaviour, with a transformed community safety service that works more effectively with partners to respond to resident concerns. This must include work to effect behaviour change amongst the minority of residents who aren't acting responsibly, for example with our youth and outreach services, and in partnership with others. I would like the new ASB strategy to be brought to Cabinet.

c) **Greater Prosperity.** We have a responsibility to ensure all of our residents share in the growth of our borough, and can access local jobs and training, and other opportunities. We should ensure that a refreshed Workpath service offers tailored support for those that need it, and help to shape a new and comprehensive offer for young people post-16.

d) **Quality of Life.** Our residents are incredibly creative, diverse, and dynamic, and we should be enabling them to access more cultural, community, and leisure activities. A new leisure strategy should set out how we will meet the demand for sport and exercise facilities, and I also want to see significant improvement to our capacity to deliver smaller capital projects, such as the community hubs programme, sports facilities, environmental improvements, and in parks.

All areas of the council's work are of course important but I would ask that you provide particular personal attention to the improvement of service in the four priority areas over the next period, and report back to me with milestones and a clear outline of target dates by February 2017.

Achieving Excellence

My proposed three-year Budget seeks to ensure that our resources are aligned more effectively to meet these priorities, and the new structure you have put in place from January 2017 should better enable us to deliver our priorities by encouraging cross-council working. Under our leadership, our Council's management must be creative and innovative in achieving this, challenging any culture of organisational convenience in the pursuit of excellence. This council must be an exciting, challenging place to work so we can attract and retain the best staff, who want to work here to grow professionally and to achieve for residents.

In order to make real progress we require all departments and staff to understand that they are part of the Council's wider mission to serve residents better. And we must continue to improve the culture of the council into one that is outward-looking, confident, and ambitious for residents. Therefore there are four key outcomes that I would like you to deliver in 2017:

i) **Refreshing the Strategic Plan.** Last year we adopted a new plan that set out how the Council's priorities for action and how my manifesto commitments would be implemented. It is important that all the leaders in the organisation, including my Cabinet, feel ownership of the priorities and outcomes in the Plan, and are held accountable for its delivery. Therefore now is an appropriate time to refresh the actions and success measures, and put in place a framework to assess our progress against the Plan and also the measures contained in the Budget.

ii) **Preparing for the exit of the Commissioners.** We have made real progress this year in facing up to, understanding, and tackling the underlying problems that led to the imposition of Directions in

several areas by the Secretary of State in 2014 and 2015. It is important that we are well-prepared to assume full control when Directions are lifted, and I need your assurance that there is a strong culture of compliance and transparency across the Council. I expect you to outline how best we can demonstrate this to the Secretary of State, and how in turn this culture can be further embedded, and self-reinforced, when they are gone.

iii) **Embedding an outward looking council culture.** Tower Hamlets has been insular for too long. It is important that we recognise the council cannot achieve our vision on its own. Only by working with residents, partners and local businesses can we unleash our potential to deliver excellent services, attract investment and provide real opportunity for all. We must also listen to and learn from people's experience to ensure we meet the needs of all our communities – from the most articulate to the quietest voices. As part of this I would like you to establish a new strategic partnership that has more effective arrangements for working with partners and residents, with the goal of producing a new Community Plan in 2018. We must also continue to improve how we communicate with our residents, including sharing our positive achievements to build trust and extend understanding of our mission.

iv) **Improving delivery of the capital programme.** Producing a three-year revenue budget has been a step in the right direction for our borough, but it has confirmed my view of the need for closer political oversight of our capital budget. I would like you to formulate a proposal by which the Mayor and Cabinet can receive regular advice on (and make clear recommendations about) the formulation and delivery of the Capital Strategy, including the asset management and disposals policy and the prioritisation of capital resources, as well as receiving reports about the progress of major projects, including the delivery of the new Civic Centre in Whitechapel, and our plan to build 1000 new council homes for rent.

Again, I would ask that you provide personal attention to these areas over the next period, and report back to me with milestones and a timeline at the earliest opportunity.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most diverse and vibrant parts of the greatest city on earth. It's a great place to be, and a place with much unfulfilled potential. It's time for this council to step up and become a council that the people of Tower Hamlets can be proud of. I hope this letter will be helpful to you and your team in understanding my ambition and vision for the borough, and how I believe we can deliver it. I look forward to your response and anticipate the delivery of these objectives will be considered as part of the cross-party performance appraisal process.

Yours sincerely,

John Biggs
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets

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